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California State Senate

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MANUFACTURED HOMES

February 27, 2007

Director David Gilb
California Department of Personnel Administration
1515 S Street
North Building, Ste. 400
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Director Gilb,

As members of the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee, we are writing to request additional information that was missing from a report that was required per Item 9800, Provision 4, Augmentation for Employee Compensation. The language provision in the 2006 Budget Act specified the following "...explaining the purposes for and the manner in which the funds are to be allocated, describing the problem that the funds aim to address, and identifying the departments to which the funds will be allocated."

Specifically, we are seeking information that provides an explanation of the purposes for and a description of the problem that the funds aim to address for recruitment and retention of California's Fish and Game Wardens. The report of October 10, 2006 was deficient in addressing this matter.

By way of background, during the 2006-07 subcommittee budget process, as well as in the Budget Conference Committee, much discussion centered on the recruitment and retention of Fish and Game wardens. While the Legislature ultimately agreed to more general language pertaining to recruitment and retention of certain state employees, the need to thoroughly analyze and report on the wardens' recruitment and retention issue was missing in the final report.

We are requesting detailed information as to how the Department of Personnel Administration and Department of Finance plan addresses the worsening warden recruitment and retention crisis.

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Director David Gilb

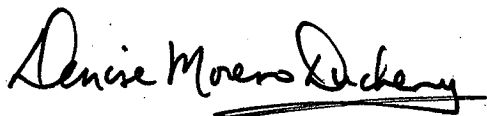
Warden recruitment and retention crisis

As the attached Sacramento Bee article outlines and recent recruitment efforts show, the failure to fulfill last year's agreement is having devastating consequences, including:

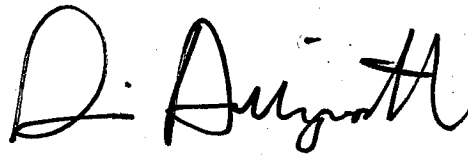
- The state has lost 11 game wardens since June and is now down to 191 field-level wardens to cover the entire state. The Department of Fish and Game now has approximately 75 warden vacancies.
- Applications for the state's game warden training academy have declined by 20% in one year. This exacerbates the shortfall in a classification where only five percent of warden applicants meet warden qualifications – which, unlike other law enforcement positions, include a two-year degree.
- It is projected that the aging of our existing wardens and increasing competition with city and county police agencies and other state agencies will result in a further 40 percent decline in wardens over the next three years

We request the detailed analysis of how implementation of the October 10 report, addresses the warden recruitment and retention issue discussed during last year's budget deliberations. We believe this analysis should have already been completed and should be immediately transmitted to us.

Sincerely,



Senator Denise Ducheny



Senator Dennis Hollingsworth



Senator Dave Cogdill

Cc: Mike Genest, Director, Department of Finance
Mike Chrisman, California Resources Agency

MAIN NEWS

Game warden academy applications plummet; Field officers an 'endangered species,' recruiter warns.

Matt Weiser Bee Staff Writer

744 words

28 November 2006

The Sacramento Bee

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English

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Applications for California's game warden training academy have fallen to just one-third of last year's levels, prompting concern that a crisis in state wildlife protection is deepening.

Lt. Jeff Longwell, in charge of hiring and recruiting the warden force for the state Department of **Fish** and Game, said he has received only 98 applications for the training academy that begins in January 2008. The application deadline is Friday.

That compares to 300 applications received last year for the academy that begins in January 2007. Only 14 of those were eventually accepted for the academy, reflecting a rigorous testing process.

If the same ratio holds for the next academy, the state will produce only five new wardens, well below attrition caused by low pay and retirement.

The state has lost 11 **game wardens** since June and is now down to 181 field-level wardens to cover the entire state. The Department of **Fish** and Game now has about 75 warden vacancies.

"Maybe it's going to take all the natural resources in the state to be gone before people say, 'Oh, maybe we should do something about this'," said Longwell. "Unfortunately, we are becoming an endangered species, too. That's just the bottom line."

State **game wardens** have all the same law enforcement powers as other state and local police, and then some. They are deputized as federal law officers because they protect migratory wildlife. In addition to enforcing hunting and fishing regulations, they also handle a wide range of rural crimes, from drug trafficking to pollution.

Unlike California Highway Patrol officers, wardens must have at least two years of college education. And their work is often more demanding: They usually patrol alone in remote areas, far beyond radio contact, and they must maintain a home office.

A game warden freshly minted from the academy earns \$37,128 a year. A new highway patrol officer earns \$53,808.

Wardens get a 15 percent pay increase in this year's budget, effective Jan. 1. CHP officers get a 10 percent boost, so the disparity largely remains, Longwell said.

Many wardens are leaving the force to take better pay with city and county police agencies. The state is also expected to lose 40 percent of its wardens over the next three years to retirement.

"We send these guys out into the middle of nowhere by themselves to protect the state's resources, and we expect them to live in hovels," Longwell said. "We're just going to lose everybody unless something is done."

California now has about one game warden per 860 square miles of land area. That compares to about one warden per 520 square miles in Texas, which has 491 wardens and recently graduated 25 more, even though it has a population about 30 percent smaller than California.

Texas has a parity law stating that game warden salaries must be equivalent to other police agencies. California does not.

"I've characterized this before as a crisis and I think it is one -- and it continues to deepen, quite frankly," said Assemblyman David Cogdill, R-Modesto, who was elected to a state Senate seat earlier this month. "You're going to see more and more poaching, obviously. It definitely impacts the quality of hunting and fishing in this state."

Cogdill lobbied earlier this year to obtain parity for wardens, and said he will do so again in the new legislative session, which begins Dec. 4.

The Bee's Matt Weiser can be reached at (916) 321-1264 or mweiser@sacbee.com.

Warden's Work At A Glance

The number of state **game wardens** is dwindling, and applications to become a warden have plunged. Here's the scoop:

- * State **game wardens** have all the same law enforcement powers as other state and local police. Besides enforcing hunting and fishing regulations, they handle rural crimes, from drug trafficking to pollution.

- * Unlike California Highway Patrol officers, wardens must have at least two years of college education.

- * A newly trained game warden earns \$37,128 a year. A new CHP officer earns \$53,808.

- * California now has about one game warden per 860 square miles. That compares to about one warden per 520 square miles in Texas.

- * Texas has a parity law stating that game warden salaries must be equivalent to other police agencies. California does not.